

## **Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 88 (Ohio Property Protection Act)**

Submitted to the Ohio Senate General Government Committee

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written opponent testimony on Senate Bill 88, the proposed "Ohio Property Protection Act."

My name is Xiang Chen, and I have proudly called Columbus, Ohio home for the past 15 years. I came to Ohio in 2010 as a graduate student at The Ohio State University, where I earned a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering. In 2018, I became a U.S. permanent resident. My wife, also an immigrant from China with a Ph.D. from OSU, and I have made our lives here. Our two daughters were both born at the OSU Wexner Medical Center—they're what we fondly call "Buckeye babies." Today, at 13 and 10 years old, Ohio is the only home they've ever known.

Ohio is where we were educated, where we work, where we raise our family, and where we contribute to the economy and community. That's why I am deeply concerned about the broad and far-reaching consequences of SB 88.

While I support the goal of protecting Ohio's critical infrastructure and national interests, this bill casts too wide a net. It prohibits land ownership based on national origin and citizenship status in ways that could affect long-term residents and legal immigrants—people like me and my family—who have done everything by the book.

The definition of "protected property" in SB 88 is so expansive, covering agricultural land and any property within 25 miles of military installations or critical infrastructure, that large portions of the state may be swept in. At the same time, the bill imposes categorical restrictions on individuals and businesses connected to certain foreign countries, even when those individuals are U.S. permanent residents or dual citizens with no connection to wrongdoing.

This is not only discriminatory in spirit—it's also deeply unfair. It punishes people not based on what they've done, but based on where they were born.

Moreover, the bill rests on a flawed assumption—that a person's immigration status or national origin is a reliable indicator of whether they pose a security threat. There is no inherent connection between being a citizen or permanent resident of a "foreign adversary" country and being an agent of that government. To treat every individual from such a country with suspicion—regardless of their actual conduct, loyalties, or contributions—is not only unjust, but counterproductive.

Laws like SB 88 send a chilling message to the very individuals we should be working to attract and retain: highly educated, law-abiding, and skilled professionals who came to the U.S. to build a better life. Many of us chose Ohio—and the United States—precisely because of its values, freedoms, and rule of law. Pushing foreign-born talent away, particularly those from countries labeled as adversaries, risks driving them back to those same countries. This would not strengthen national security—it would undermine it by depriving the U.S. of the very people who drive innovation, research, and long-term prosperity.

My wife and I have built a life here through years of hard work, education, and dedication. Our daughters—true Buckeyes in every sense—deserve to grow up in a state that recognizes the contributions of immigrant families and treats all residents with fairness and dignity. SB 88 undermines that promise.

It also burdens local officials like county auditors and sheriffs with the difficult task of investigating land transactions based on complex global ownership structures. These are not matters best left to local law enforcement, especially when federal agencies already handle foreign investment oversight.

Finally, this bill sends the wrong message—that certain people, no matter how law-abiding or integrated into the community, will always be viewed with suspicion. That is not the Ohio I know. Ohio is a place of opportunity, fairness, and welcome. I respectfully urge you to protect that legacy by rejecting or significantly narrowing SB 88.

Sincerely,

Xiang Chen, PhD

Columbus, Ohio Resident